

# CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Laudatio by David Edward

## All European Academies Madame de Staël Prize for Cultural Values

in the context of the ALLEA General Assembly 2017

4 September 2017 | Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

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It is an honour and a privilege to be asked to deliver this *laudatio* for Professor Koen Lenaerts, President of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

It's a very special pleasure for me, as we were sworn in together in 1989 as two of the Judges of the new European Court of First Instance – now the General Court of the European Union.

I was one of the older judges. Koen was, by some distance, the youngest, having been appointed at the age of 34. He says that I used to refer affectionately to his *cabinet* as “the Baby Cabinet”.

Already at that stage, it was clear that we had amongst us one of the outstanding exponents of European Union law and a powerful judicial intellect.

Let me, very briefly, trace his stellar academic history.

He graduated *summa cum laude* at the Universities of Namur and Leuven. From there he went to Harvard and graduated with Master's degrees in Law and Public Administration. After Harvard, he returned to the University of Leuven, where he completed his doctorate, for which he was awarded the Prize of the Royal Belgian Academy of Sciences.

He was almost at once, appointed Professor of European Law at the University of Leuven. He has held that position ever since - still taking time to engage with the students.

He has held many visiting professorships at universities in Europe and America. He has served on the governing and advisory boards of many universities, institutes and learned journals. And he has been a member of *Academia Europaea* since 1988. The number of his publications and public lectures is beyond my powers of computation.

But his principal activity for the last 28 years has been as a Judge of the European Courts in Luxembourg – for 14 years as a Judge of the Court of First Instance, and a further 14 years as a Judge of the European Court of Justice (now known as the Court of Justice of the European Union).

He was Vice-President of that Court for three years and, to no-one's surprise, he was elected President in 2015.

Such are his public distinctions, both academic and judicial. These alone would justify his recognition here.

But there are other - and perhaps more important - reasons why he should be awarded the Madame de Staël Prize for Cultural Values.

Madame de Staël holds a special place in the history of European Romanticism, but also in the idea of constitutionalism - the principle that the authority of government is derived from, and limited by, a body of fundamental law. That principle is central to the very existence of the European Union. Without it, the Union can be no more than an assemblage of States.

Koen Lenaerts, in his writings, his public lectures and especially in his judicial work, has been one of the foremost exponents of the principle of constitutionalism in practice. He brings the doctrines of the classroom and the world of academia to bear on the day-to-day work of the courts. Not only does he do that, but he also explains why this should be so.

We started together as Judges in Luxembourg just before the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Treaty of Maastricht. At that time, Europe was full of light and optimism, and Francis Fukuyama predicted the End of History.

Since then, we have had too much history. As our core values are under constant threat, we depend ever more on those like Koen Lenaerts to keep alive the flame of constitutional lawfulness.

I cannot end without saying something more personal about Koen.

He and his lovely wife Kris have six beautiful daughters – all showing every sign of their inherited genes. To everyone he meets, and particularly students and younger colleagues in the academic and legal world, Koen is – as

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one of them said - "warm and curious" - warm in his personal relations, without any distinction of status -curious to know about others, to know what they are doing and to hear their ideas.

As to his hopes for his legacy as President of the Court of Justice, he has summed them up in one word - "Quality".

So I ask you to confer the Madame de Staël Prize on a man of very special quality - President Koen Lenaerts.

\*\*\*\*\* End of speech\*\*\*\*\*